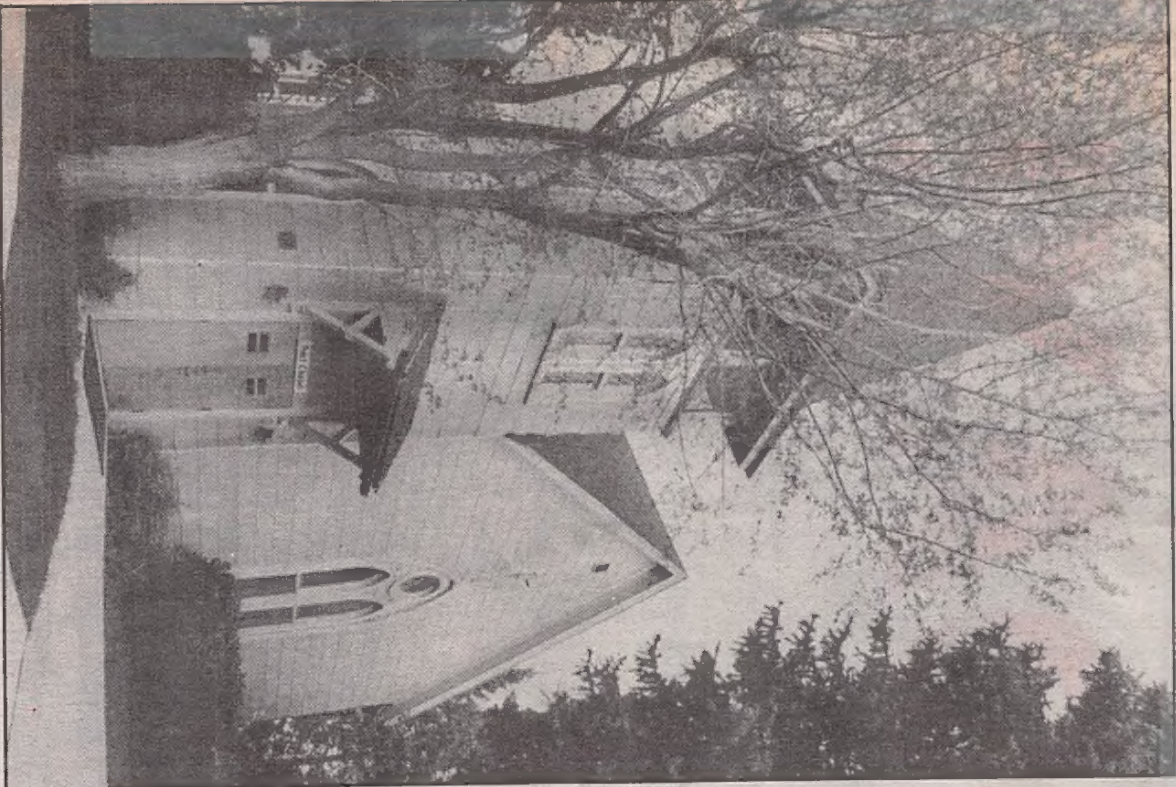


Fort Douglas: Where history lingers



The chapel at Fort Douglas, left, will be among the buildings included in a tour planned by the Utah Heritage Foundation. Col. Patrick Connor, right, ordered to Utah in 1862 to protect the overland mail, was the first commanding officer at the fort.

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THURSDAY, MAY 10, 1990

Army kept watch on 'the Mormons'

Stories by Dennis Lythgoe

Deseret News staff writer

Contemporary photos by Ravell Call

Deseret News photographer

UTAH'S FORT DOUGLAS is part of a rich historical heritage. Its origin as a military installation can be traced to Col. Patrick Edward Connor and his expedition of California-Nevada volunteers, ordered to Utah in 1862 to protect the overland mail route between Carson Valley, Nev., and Fort Laramie in the Wyoming Territory from the Indians. Clearly, the federal government thought that the mail route was not secure in Mormon hands and that surveillance of the Mormons was also necessary.

Connor himself was convinced that Salt Lake City constituted "a community of traitors, murderers, fanatics and whores," and that unless protection of the mail route was the government's only consideration, a fort near Salt Lake City would be a necessity. This unfortunate interpretation produced a state of tension between the Mormons led by Brigham Young and the gentiles led by Connor.

Connor's expedition arrived in the valley of the Great Salt Lake just after the middle of October. On Monday, Oct. 21, the expedition marched through the city and made camp on the east bench, between Emigration and Red Butte Canyons, "in the vicinity of good timber and sawmills, and at a point where hay, grain and other produce" could be purchased. This first camp was located about a half mile northwest of where Brigham Young made his famous statement upon looking over the valley, "This is the right place."

On Oct. 22, a site north of Red Butte Creek was selected for the post, and the troops moved there. It was thought that the officers of the command wanted the post named after their commanding officer. Apparently, at the suggestion of President Lincoln, it was officially established on Oct. 26, 1862, and named after his recently deceased opponent in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates and the presidential election of 1860, Sen. Stephen L. Douglas of Illinois.

The reservation included "more or less 2,560 acres" nestled at the foot of the Wasatch Mountains on a plateau overlooking Salt Lake City. The troops spent the first winter in tents and dugouts, and during the following summer constructed permanent quarters. A small log hospital, a quartermaster building, a commanding officer's quarters, a guardhouse, a bake house, a blacksmith shop and some officers' quarters were constructed of wood and adobe for the first win-



Soldiers stand at attention, above, during military exercises in the 1870s. Commanding officer's home, below, and the cemetery will be featured in tours this month.

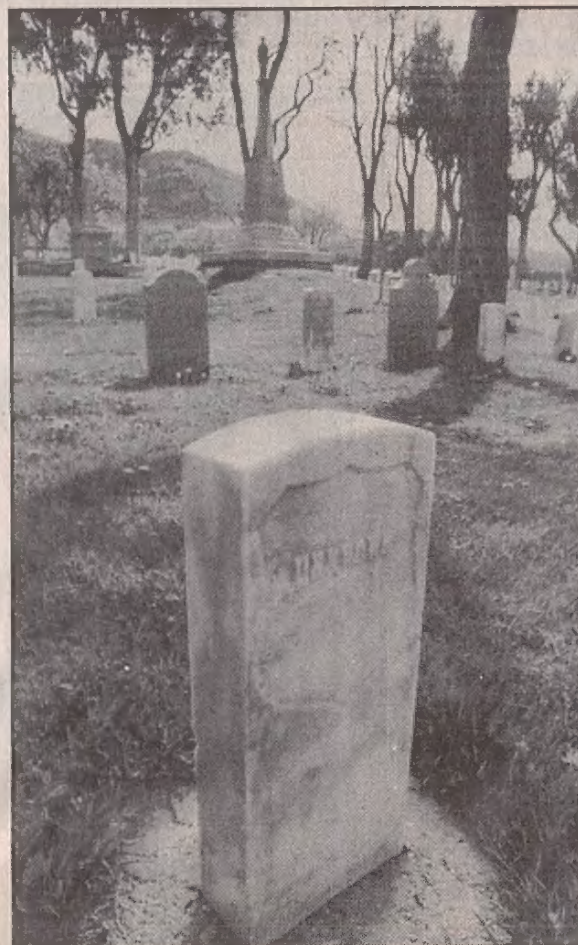


ter. The next year, the soldiers built a number of permanent log, adobe and stone buildings.

While the log huts and dugouts of the original camp have disappeared, the post cemetery, situated on a hill overlooking the Salt Lake Valley, today retains all the character of a New England cemetery. It was laid out in December 1862.

After the establishment of Camp Douglas, Connor and his men worked on disciplining the Indians. Their most important expedition led to the Battle — now often described as the Massacre — of Bear River in 1863, where Connor's men virtually eliminated a party of more than 300 men, women and children. Following

Please see HISTORY on C8



Foundation plans May 19-20 tour

To help celebrate the influence of Fort Douglas, the Utah Heritage Foundation has made it the focus of the 1990 Homes Tour on May 19-20, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with the theme, "Where History Lingers."

Even though they're aware of Fort Douglas and its place in the state's history, most Utahns have never set foot on its soil. Numerous changes have been made over the past century or so, but the buildings retain a notable charm. The interiors of many are attractive and interesting, especially Building 55, which is of adobe construction and the oldest remaining building on post, built in 1863. It is now the commanding officer's quarters.

The tour, chaired by Judith Anderson and Terrie Sharp, will include a tour of seven private residences, including the commanding officer's home and the quartermaster Victorian historical structures. Tours will also be offered of the fort theater, museum and chapel, as well as the cemetery. A shuttle will operate between the cemetery and other activities. There will be historical demonstrations and re-enactments around the parade grounds and at various locations, with costumed actors, guides, antique cars, live music and refreshments. Parking will be available west of Fort Douglas in the University of Utah lot.

Entry to the fort will be free and open to the public, but the Heritage Foundation is requesting donations for the tours of homes: \$20 for families, \$7 for the general public, \$3 for children 5-15; children under 5 will be admitted free. Inquiries should be directed to the Utah Heritage Foundation, 355 Quince St., Salt Lake City, UT 84103, 533-0858.

Tickets are available at these outlets:

Basil's, Crossroads Plaza, 50 S. Main; Black Goode Design, 97 N. Holden, Midvale; Crackers, 898 S. 900 East; Country Furniture, 1095 W. 7800 South; the Basket Loft, Trolley Square; the Trolley Square Information Center; Ec Lec Tic, 466 E. South Temple; Felt Buchorn, 445 E. South Temple; Gentler Times, 4880 S. Highland Circle; the Stargazer, 254 E. 100 South; and the Upper Crust, 1412 S. Foothill Drive.

HISTORY

Continued from C1

the expedition, Connor was promoted to brigadier general. Then there were other skirmishes in the Cache, Skull, Cedar and Utah valleys.

Fort Douglas has another claim to fame. It was there that Utah's first daily newspaper, the Daily Union Vedette, was published, from 1863 to 1867. It was the voice of the men and officers of Camp Douglas, and served as the unifying agent to defend the camp against any protagonist. Mormon leaders read the Vedette just as military officials read the Deseret News — to see what new attacks were being made on them. There was a reference to the Mormons in almost every issue of the Vedette, with most of the critical comment reserved for Brigham Young.

Life for the frontier soldier was not devoted exclusively to fighting Indians and outwitting Mormons. The troops built a theater in which national theatrical companies such as the Wanton Stock Company played. Between acts, men could buy pies, cakes, candies, fruits and drinks at refreshment stands. Soldiers rode the four-horse, double-decker bus to Salt Lake City, then a frontier metropolis of 20,000, though the \$16 per month that recruits received undoubtedly limited their activity. Connor himself preferred performances in the city at the Salt Lake Theatre. On Saturday evenings, Salt Lake girls were invited to attend dances at Camp Douglas

Hall.

Between 1874 and 1876, virtually every log, frame and adobe building on the post was replaced under the leadership of Col. John E. Smith of the 14th Infantry. In 1876, Camp Douglas had its official name changed to Fort Douglas. Historians have said that Fort Douglas will always stand as a monument to the non-Mormon contribution to Utah's development.

Connor and his men made the Overland Mail routes safe from Indians and also launched mining enterprises. During the late 19th century, the fort continued to guard against Indian attacks. After the Indian threat subsided, the post acted as headquarters for several regiments of federal troops who served in the Philippines, on the Mexican border, in France and later in Germany and the Pacific.

During World War I, the fort housed more than 500 German naval prisoners for 10 months, but in the 3½ years the prison was in operation, its primary occupants were German and Austro-Hungarian aliens arrested in the western United States, Alaska, Hawaii and the Philippines. There were nearly 800 of these men. Since World War II, the fort has acted as a symbol of military activities and the influence of the federal government in the Mountain West.

Today, Fort Douglas is only a shadow of its former 2,560 acres. Yet it remains Utah's oldest and most famous military establishment, representing the hub of military activity in the Salt Lake area and housing 67 families.

~~Soldier Summit
Civil War~~